



The Marines drove up the left side of this hill in their truck before flipping into the deep crevice.

# Smashing Pumpkins

*By Lynn Tacha*

**T**he next time you decide to carry your kid, dog or buddy in the bed of your pickup truck, do this first: Find a pumpkin (about the size of a person's head), go down the highway at the speed limit, and toss the pumpkin out the window. When you go back to look at the pumpkin (and clean up the mess), imagine the pumpkin is your kid's, dog's or friend's head.

If you ever decide to ride in the bed, all it takes is a small bump in the road or a turn by the driver to launch you. If you're lucky, you'll go through the rear window and wind up laying next to your buddy. You might be a bit worse for wear, but you'll probably live. However, more than likely, you'll go flying through the air, and not telling where you'll end up. And on this ride, you won't be wearing a harness. When you hit the ground, you'll have momentum behind you, and things will be messy.

Here's what happened to a lance corporal who decided to ride in the back of a pickup truck. After drinking a 12 pack of beer, while on leave in his hometown, the lance corporal, his wife, and several of their friends decided to ride in the bed of a pick-up truck. He stood up while it was moving, and as they made a turn in the road, he was ejected. He landed on his head and suffered a severe head injury.

In another instance, a Marine was sitting on the toolbox in the bed of a pick-up when the driver made a sharp turn. He fell out of the truck and struck his head on the pavement, fracturing his skull.

Since 1994, 10 Marines have been injured while riding in the bed of pick-up trucks, and two Marines have been killed. Here is a story of the latest two Marines who were thrown from a pickup truck bed.



It was early morning, when a unit finished its hike in the training area. After marching the Marines to an outdoor classroom, two instructors, who were sergeants, decided to drive several miles to the nearest fast-food restaurant using a truck that belonged to one of the sergeants. After picking up food and drinks, they drove back to the outdoor classroom. Along the way, they offered two other instructors who were walking a ride to the outdoor classroom. The two instructors who were walking loaded a crate of ammunition into the truck bed and then climbed in.

As they neared the classroom, the driver decided to take a shortcut. He left the dirt road and drove up a small hill that led to the outdoor classroom—this way he could park closer. The driver placed the truck in 4-wheel drive and slowly climbed the hill. But it was too steep. He backed down the hill to try again, but his second attempt failed. His passengers told him to try again, and said that he could make it. This time he crested the hill and stopped. Thinking that he had made it, he felt the truck lean right. The passenger-side wheels slipped into a washout, which was 14 feet wide and 8 feet deep. The truck tipped, then flipped into the deep crevice, and landed

upside down. The two instructors riding in the pickup's bed were thrown to the bottom of the crevice, where one of them injured his back. The other instructor wasn't as fortunate; he died when the truck bed landed on him and crushed his head.

If you're driving a motor vehicle on or off base, you must wear a seatbelt—that's a Marine Corps order<sup>1</sup>.

Unless the pickup's bed is equipped with seatbelts, you have to sit in a seat. Even if the distance you may want to travel is short, riding in a truck bed is not a good idea. If you're thinking about doing it, think of the worst possible consequence that could

happen to you. Then ask yourself if the ride is worth it. Maybe you could walk or have the driver make another trip so you can ride in the cab where you can wear a seatbelt. Remember, the last Marine that died was traveling a short distance.

Don't forget that pumpkin head. If you think scooping up the insides of the pumpkin was a mess, you should be glad you're not a rescue worker who has to scrape brains off the road. 🍻

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<sup>1</sup>MCO 5100.19D Marine Corps Traffic Safety Program (Drive Safe)

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